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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/536,997	05/31/2005	Shuji Yamaoka	052644	6518

38834 7590 02/13/2006

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EXAMINER	
ZHU, JOHN X	

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2858	

DATE MAILED: 02/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/536,997	YAMAOKA ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	John Zhu	2858	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _____.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1-26* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1-14 and 16-25* is/are rejected.

7)☒ Claim(s) *15 and 26* is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☒ The drawing(s) filed on *31 May 2005* is/are: a)☒ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☒ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date *5/31/05*.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Specification

1. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: the placement of patent publications 1 and 2 (Page 2, lines 18-19) makes no relation to preceding and succeeding paragraphs.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 16 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada (6,373,258 B2) in view of Sotaro et al. (JP 2001-84905).

With respect to claims 1, 2, 16 and 17, Takada discloses an AC board inspection probe and method for inspecting pattern lines (Fig. 1) on a circuit board comprising supply means including a supply electrode (Fig. 4, element 310) for supplying an inspection signal from the first end of pattern, detection means including a sensor electrode (element 620) for detecting a signal from the second end of pattern, and moving means (Column 4, lines 31-32/Fig. 9, element 900) for moving the probe.

Takada does not explicitly disclose moving both supply and sensor electrodes across first and second ends with a given gap relative to each of target patterns, but rather, moving the sensor electrode across second end with a given gap relative to each of said target patterns (Fig. 9). Furthermore, Takada does not explicitly disclose the target patterns being conductive patterns formed on a circuit board having a bar-like shape with a given width.

Sotaro discloses moving both the supply and sensor electrodes across first and second ends (Abstract/Fig. 3) with a given gap relative to each of conductive patterns (Fig. 3, element 12) on a circuit board (element 11) having a bar-like shape with a given width.

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the moving means of both the supply and sensor electrodes and conductive patterns on a circuit board as taught by Sotaro into the system of Takada for the purpose of inspecting all target patterns on a circuit board.

With respect to claim 3, Takada further discloses the width of the sensor electrode has a length to cover a plurality of rows of conductive pattern lines (Claim 1).

With respect to claim 7, Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly disclose the moving means is adapted to move supply and sensor electrodes under the condition that each surface of supply and sensor electrodes is capacitively coupled with each of the target patterns.

However, Takada discloses the surface of supply and sensor electrodes is capacitively coupled with the target patterns in order to test the pattern (Column 2, lines 1-8). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to only move the supply and sensor electrodes of Takada and Sotaro under the condition that a capacitance coupling occurs for the purpose of actually testing the target pattern before moving on to test the next target pattern.

With respect to claim 8, Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly disclose a range to determine if target pattern is normal when determination means output a result that falls within the range, or target pattern is defective when the output result is out of the range.

However, Takada discloses a predetermined threshold to determine whether a disconnection is present in pattern lines. If the detected signal is much lower than the reference level, then a disconnection is present (Column 8, lines 47-55).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate a range into the system of Takada and Sotaro for the purpose to see how much lower the detected signal than the predetermined level has to be to indicate a defect in the pattern.

4. Claims 4, 5, 6,18, 19, 20 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada and Sotaro as applied to claims 2 and 17 above, and further in view of Hironobu (JP 05-333357).

With respect to claims 4 and 19, Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly a sensor electrode includes a first sensor electrode disposed at a position opposed to the second end of one of the adjacent target patterns which has the first end supplied with the inspection signal from the supply electrode, so as to allow the detection of disconnection, and a second sensor electrode adapted to be disposed at a position opposed to the second end of a remaining one of the adjacent target patterns, so as to allow the presence of short circuit between adjacent target patterns to be determined.

Hironobu discloses a first sensor electrode (Fig. 1, element 4) disposed at a position opposed to the second end of one of the adjacent target patterns which has the first end supplied with the inspection signal from the supply electrode (element 3) to allow the detection of disconnection and a second sensor electrode (element 5) adapted to be disposed at a position opposed to the second end of a remaining one of the adjacent target patterns to allow the detection of short circuit.

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the two sensor electrodes as taught by Hironobu into the system of Takada and Sotaro for the purpose of detecting the presence/absence of disconnection and short-circuiting of the strip pattern (Abstract).

With respect to claims 5 and 6, Takada and Sotaro do not disclose the first and second sensor electrodes having a width equal to or less than each width of target patterns.

Hironobu discloses the first and second sensor probes with electrodes widths smaller than each of the widths of target patterns (Fig. 1) contacting the patterns.

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the first and second sensor probes with electrode widths smaller than each of the widths of target patterns as taught by Hironobu into the system of Takada and Sotaro for the purpose of making secure electrical connections with the target patterns without interference.

With respect to claim 18, Takada and Sotaro disclose all aspects of the claim including the width of the sensor electrode having a length to cover a plurality of rows of conductive pattern lines (Takada, claim 1).

Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly disclose detecting a signal from one of the adjacent target patterns a remaining one of which is supplied with the inspection signal, so as to allow the presence of short circuit between adjacent target patterns to be determined.

Hironobu discloses a detection probe 5 detecting a signal from one of the adjacent target patterns a remaining one of which is supplied with the inspection signal, so as to allow the present of short circuit between adjacent target patterns to be determined (Abstract).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the detection of adjacent target patterns as

taught by Hironobu into the system of Takada and Sotaro for the purpose of detecting the presence/absence of short circuits (Abstract).

With respect to claim 20, Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly disclose determining a general position of a disconnected region in the target pattern where no detection signal is detected.

Hironobu discloses a three-probe system in which no electrical potential difference being detected by the sensor when a disconnection occurs on the target pattern and knowing the particular strip is defective since the probes are connected to it.

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate determination of disconnection via no detection signal as taught by Hironobu into the system of Takada and Sotaro for the purpose of detecting the presence/absence of short circuits and disconnections (Abstract).

With respect to claim 21, Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu do not explicitly disclose a range to determine if target pattern is normal when determination means output a result that falls within the range, or target pattern is defective when the output result is out of the range.

However, Takada discloses a predetermined threshold to determine whether a disconnection is present in pattern lines. If the detected signal is much lower than the reference level, then a disconnection is present (Column 8, lines 47-55).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate a range into the system of Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu for the purpose to see how much lower the detected signal than the predetermined level has to be to indicate a defect in the pattern.

5. Claims 9 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada and Sotaro as applied to claim 8 above, and further in view of Norio (JP 2000-221227).

With respect to claim 9, Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly disclose second moving means for moving supply and sensor electrodes to respective positions opposed to the first and second ends of pattern and moving either one of the electrodes along defective target pattern toward the other electrode, or position detection means for detecting a position where a detection signal has a change.

Norio discloses a second moving means (Fig. 1, element 5) that moves the voltage sensor electrode and supply electrode along defective target patterns (element 2) and position detection means for detecting a position along the x-axis when the voltage detected by the voltage sensor changes (Fig. 5-7).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the second moving means and position detection means as taught by Norio into the system of Takada and Sotaro for the purpose of locating/positioning the failure of the disconnection or the short-circuit (Abstract).

With respect to claim 10, although Takada and Sotaro do not explicitly disclose contact means for bringing either one of supply and sensor electrodes into contact with defective target pattern, it is inherent that some sort of contact means (either manual or automatic) must be present in order to allow the contact of the supply means to the pattern for the purpose of injecting the pattern with test currents for testing.

6. Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada, Sotaro and Norio (JP 2000-221227) as applied to claim 9 above, and further in view of Kawaike et al. (6,937,035 B2).

With respect to claim 11, Takada, Sotaro and Norio do not explicitly disclose image pickup means included with electrodes.

Kawaike discloses circuit board inspection including image pickup means via visual recognition device (Column1, lines 26-27).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the image pickup means as taught by

Kawaike into the system of Takada, Sotaro and Norio for the purpose of visually inspecting circuit boards for defects (Column 1, lines 29-38).

7. Claims 12, 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada, Sotaro and Norio as applied to claims 2 and 9 above, and further in view of Tanaka et al. (5,241,276).

With respect to claims 12 and 13, Takada, Sotaro and Norio do not disclose gap control means for positioning at least one of the electrodes in such a manner as to allow a gap between at least one electrode and target pattern to be maintained at an approximately constant value.

However, as one of ordinary skill in the art would know, it is obvious to keep a gap as constant as possible in a capacitive sensor because any variation in a gap would cause different measurement results. Furthermore, Tanaka discloses a surface potential capacitive measuring system comprising means for keeping a gap between one electrode and target sample substantially constant (Claim 3).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the means for keeping a gap constant as taught by Tanaka into the system of Takada, Sotaro and Norio for the purpose of more accurate measuring results.

With respect to claim 14, Takada, Sotaro and Norio do not disclose a displacement measurement device with the gap control means with the gap control

means being operable to position the sensor in a direction orthogonal to the inspection region with a detection result to allow a gap between sensor and inspection region to be maintained at an approximately constant value.

Tanaka discloses a displacement sensor measurement device (Fig. 5, element 47) connected to the probe structure and electrode (elements 34 and 11) that allows a gap between the electrode and inspection region to be maintained at a constant distance. Although Tanaka does not explicitly the disclose the displacement measurement device at a position adjacent to the sensor and adapted to moved together with sensor, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to integrate the displacement measurement device with the movable sensor to measure displacement even when the sensor is moved to different positions.

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the displacement measurement device as taught by Tanaka into the system of Takada, Sotaro and Norio for the purpose of controlling the distance between the probe and the device under test based on measured results.

8. Claims 22 and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu as applied to claim 21 above, and further in view of Norio (JP 2000-221227).

With respect to claim 22, Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu do not explicitly disclose specifying a position of defective pattern and storing information, moving electrodes to respective positions opposed to the ends in accordance with stored information, moving either one of the electrodes to area of defective location, and detecting a position of defective pattern based on change of detection results.

Norio discloses a second moving means (Fig. 1, element 5) that moves the voltage sensor electrode and supply electrode along defective target patterns (element 2) and position detection means for detecting a position along the x-axis when the voltage detected by the voltage sensor changes (Fig. 5-7).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the second moving means and position detection means as taught by Norio into the system of Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu for the purpose of locating/positioning the failure of the disconnection or the short-circuit (Abstract).

With respect to claim 23, although Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu do not explicitly disclose contact means for bringing either one of supply and sensor electrodes into contact with defective target pattern, it is inherent that some sort of contact means (either manual or automatic) must be present in order to allow the contact of the supply means to the pattern for the purpose of injecting the pattern with test currents for testing.

9. Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable Takada, Sotaro, Hironobu and Norio as applied to claim 22 above, and further in view of Kawaike et al. (6,937,035 B2).

With respect to claim 24, Takada, Sotaro, Hironobu and Norio do not explicitly disclose image pickup means included with electrodes and moving pickup means together with at least one electrode along defective pattern.

Kawaike discloses circuit board inspection including image pickup means via visual recognition device (Column1, lines 26-27).

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the image pickup means with electrodes as taught by Kawaike into the system of Takada, Sotaro, Hironobu and Norio for the purpose of visually inspecting circuit boards for defects (Column 1, lines 29-38).

10. Claim 25 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu as applied to claim 18 above, and further in view of Tanaka et al. (5,241,276).

With respect to claim 14, Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu do not disclose a displacement measurement device with the gap control means with the gap control means being operable to position the sensor in a direction orthogonal to the inspection region with a detection result to allow a gap between sensor and inspection region to be maintained at an approximately constant value.

Tanaka discloses a displacement sensor measurement device (Fig. 5, element 47) connected to the probe structure and electrode (elements 34 and 11) that allows a gap between the electrode and inspection region to be maintained at a constant distance. Although Tanaka does not explicitly the disclose the displacement measurement device at a position adjacent to the sensor and adapted to moved together with sensor, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to integrate the displacement measurement device with the movable sensor to measure displacement even when the sensor is moved to different positions.

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the displacement measurement device as taught by Tanaka into the system of Takada, Sotaro and Hironobu for the purpose of controlling the distance between the probe and the device under test based on measured results.

Allowable Subject Matter

11. Claims 15 and 26 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

12. The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: claims 15 and 26 are allowable over the art of record because the prior art does not teach or suggest a circuit pattern inspection apparatus and means with gap control operable to position sensor or supply electrode in a direction orthogonal to inspection

region on the basis of a gap defined by an average displacement of a detection result obtained from a plurality of pitches of target patterns.

Conclusion

13. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Yamaoka et al. (US PG Pub no. 2004/0095144 A1) discloses an AC inspection apparatus and method for conductive strips on circuit boards and Odan et al. (6,967,498 B2) discloses a similar apparatus and method for electronic circuit inspection. Okano et al. (US PG Pub no. 2002/0180455 A1) discloses inspection method utilizing placing capacitive sensors over multiple conductive lines.

Contact Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to John Zhu whose telephone number is (571) 272-5920. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Diane Lee can be reached on (571) 272-2399. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

John Zhu
Examiner
Art Unit 2858

JZ

ANJAN DEB
PRIMARY EXAMINER